

TENDER
LEAFY PLANTWHORLED
LEAVES

SUMMER



Strawberry

Fragaria spp.

HABITAT: Prefers well-drained soil in full sun to part shade. Often found in rocky areas alongside rural roads, streams and lakes, and in open woodlands, disturbed areas, meadows and fields.

GROWTH: Two types of wild strawberries inhabit our region: the Virginia or wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*), and the less-common woodland strawberry (*F. vesca*). Both are erect, leafy plants 4 to 8 inches high, with white, 5-petaled flowers. Since both types spread by runners (horizontal stems), it's not uncommon to find a good-sized patch of wild strawberries.

LEAVES: Coarsely toothed trifoliate leaves grow at the ends of a long, fuzzy stem. The terminal tooth of a woodland strawberry leaf is longer than the surrounding teeth, while it is shorter than the surrounding teeth on a Virginia strawberry, helping distinguish the two varieties.

FRUIT: The heart-shaped strawberry is technically not a fruit; the actual fruits are the darker seeds embedded on the surface of the swollen receptacle (the base of the flower, which is normally inside the fruit). Woodland strawberries are about 1/2 inch long when mature; the seeds sit on the surface of the receptacle. Virginia strawberries are slightly smaller, and the seeds are slightly embedded in depressions on the surface of the receptacle. Both are rich red when ripe. Strawberries continue to flower throughout summer, so flowers and fruit are present in a patch at the same time once the season gets going.

SEASON: Strawberries flower from late spring through midsummer; tiny yellow fruits follow the flowers, swelling and ripening to a juicy red fruit a week or two later. Strawberries often produce all summer.

COMPARE: Dewberries such as the dwarf raspberry (pg. 78) have similar trifoliate leaves, but the dewberry fruit is a compound drupe, and the leaflets have sharply pointed tips.

NOTES: Although smaller than commercial varieties, wild strawberries are sweeter and more intensely flavored, and well worth seeking.

green = key identification feature



Virginia strawberry



Woodland strawberry